

Municipal Council Special Meeting Minutes
Town Hall Auditorium
April 24, 2006
7:00 P.M.

President Christopher Lawrence called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., and explained the meeting was for the purpose of receiving the Fire Department Study. Further discussion will be available at the next Council meeting.

Members Present: Ann Connolly King, Robert Lavoie, Alison Lindstrom, Donna McClure, Mario Pinerio, Michelle Thone, Roger Benson, Hank Brennick, Christopher Lawrence.

Mayor Kezer gave an overview of his working relationship with Matrix and was pleased the previous Mayor had chosen this company to do the study. He stated a study of this kind could be very helpful in identifying strengths and weaknesses in the management side as well as the operational side of the department.

Travis Miller, Matrix Consulting Group, explained they were retained to conduct an Organization, Effectiveness and Efficiency study of the Fire Department. The study included: interviews with staff regarding financial and human resource issues facing the town; interview with the Chief regarding department management; collecting data regarding operations, workload, deployment, scheduling, leave, apparatus, location of the station, etc.

The following is a recap of findings and recommendations:

Organizational structure of the fire department is appropriate given the size of the community; financial management systems are in place and well utilized. Management systems should focus on training and operations which are not in place and maintaining data to support the systems. They should develop tracking mechanisms to track performance on call processing time, reaction time, drive time and training hours.

Policies and procedures are limited, do not cover critical topics and should be more current to national standards. A policy should be developed with input from staff and review of other agencies policies. It should be reviewed by Town Counsel prior to adoption and then annual or periodic reviews should take place.

Financial Management of reducing the budget by \$100,000 has been successfully addressed by changing the approach to "call back" of personnel for station coverage. This has increased use of mutual aid and has also resulted in a significant reduction in overtime expenditures. It has also resulted in a small loss of revenue.

There appears to be no formal training program for fire skills. EMS skills appear to be well organized and up to date. They suggested training records for all training should be documented and centralized. Testing should be done to ensure performance is at the minimum standards set by the department and fire fighters should be certified according to national standards.

It is recommended to adopt response standards for the Department. Quality of data is inconsistent in the dispatch process and key elements are lost. This made it difficult for Matrix to assess current performance, particularly the individual elements that make up response time.

The fire station is well located to cover most of the community quickly. The AFD can reach 93% of road miles in town within four minutes or less. 77% of calls are handled within the first six minutes. Due to missing data the project team was unable to assess dispatch processing time, reaction time or drive time.

The current level staffing enables between six and seven personnel to be on duty at all times. Deployment is governed by contract which limits flexibility. The delivery of EMS transport is a cost effective method for delivering service to the town while providing revenues. It is recommended that the Ambulance service should continue within the Fire Department.

Consolidation of dispatch should be pursued by the community. This is being looked at within the county to develop a regional emergency communication center.

Councilors and residents asked questions regarding the management system, computer programs, dispatch problems and the advantages vs. disadvantages of keeping the ambulance within the fire department. Chief Shute, Deputy Brickett and staff firemen responded to several questions regarding call back, dispatch services and the advantages of ambulance service.

President Lawrence asked that this be placed on the Municipal Council agenda for discussion and input.

Mayor Kezer thanked Mr. Miller, the Chief and staff of fire department and stated that working on the recommendations for performance and financial improvement was a responsibility that went all the way up to the Mayor and that he would take on that challenge. He stated his AMESTAT program was a way to ensure that this will be a community effort.

Councilor Lavoie moved to adjourn. Councilor Benson seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnijo Kitchin
Town Clerk